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SUBJECT: CODEL TAUSCHER APRIL 9 MEETING WITH THE EGYPTIAN  
COUNCIL ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REF: CAIRO 618

11. (SBU) Key Points:

-- Egypt's leading thinkers on non-proliferation urged the U.S. to support the concept of a nuclear-free Middle East zone, as a way to get past the Israel-Iran stalemate.

-- Egyptian Council on Foreign Affairs proposes adding a seat for an Arab representative to the 5 plus 1 talks with Iran.

-- Egypt has joined New Zealand, Ireland, Sweden, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico in forming a "New Agenda Coalition," to prepare for the upcoming NPT revcon.

12. (SBU) Comment: Egypt's leading thinkers on nuclear non-proliferation told Representative Tauscher and her delegation that the U.S.'s current focus on Iran is interpreted by many in the region as single-minded and unbalanced in the region. Their suggestion that the U.S. support a Nuclear-Free Middle East zone resolution at the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference would likely have a positive impact on our bilateral relationship with Egypt and other Arab moderate states, but would not, in itself, act to deter Iran. End comment.

13. (SBU) On April 9, Representatives Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), Michael Turner (R-OH), Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), Trent Franks (R-AZ), and Parker Griffith (D-AL) met with Egypt's leading thinkers on non-proliferation at the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA), including Ambassador Abdel Raouf el Reedy, former ambassador to the U.S., Ambassador Mohamed Shaker, former permanent representative to the IAEA, Dr. Ali Al Saeidi, former Minister of Electricity and Energy and current technical board member of the IAEA, and Ambassador Nabil Fahmy, ambassador to the U.S. between 2000-2008. El Reedy and Al Saeidi hailed the U.S.'s renewed focus on nuclear non-proliferation and President Obama's speech calling for nuclear disarmament. They predicted that the U.S.'s decision to engage Iran directly in the 5 plus 1 mechanism would move negotiations in the right direction. El Reedy welcomed the nomination of Representative Tauscher as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security.

14. (SBU) Congresswoman Tauscher thanked ECFA Chairman El Reedy for his hospitality and clarified that she was visiting the Middle East in her role as Representative and Chair of the House Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces. She affirmed that nuclear non-proliferation and preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear state were urgent and non-partisan priorities for the U.S. Administration and Congress, and sought the ECFA's guidance on Iran strategy. El Reedy commented that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained Egypt's paramount security concern, but

agreed that Iran's nuclear ambitions were a pressing threat to Egypt and the entire region. Emphasizing that President Mubarak introduced the idea of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East almost 20 years ago, El Reedy and Shaker linked progress on Iran to getting Israel to become party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (reftel). Discussing options for enhancing pressure on Iran, Shaker proposed that a representative of the Arab world join the 5 plus 1 process.

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GETTING PAST THE ISRAEL-IRAN STALEMATE  
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¶15. (SBU) Tauscher observed that Iran remains the world's primary proliferation threat, due to its support for terrorist groups, the development and dissemination of missile systems, and a history of non-compliance with the IAEA. While underscoring that Egypt and the U.S. agree that Iran is a threat, Ambassador Fahmy clarified that the two countries disagree on the extent to which Israel's uncertain nuclear status is also a proliferation threat. He said that as long as Israel is vague about whether it has a nuclear capability and refuses to join the NPT, it provides a cover for Iran's activities and threatens its Arab neighbors.

¶16. (SBU) Fahmy reminded the congressional delegation that the U.S. was one of the co-sponsors (with Russia and the UK) of the "Nuclear Free Middle East Zone" resolution in the 1995 NPT Review Conference (revcon). He recommended that President Obama publically reaffirm U.S. support for the nuclear-free Middle East concept in order to move past the Israel-Iran stalemate, without recriminations, and without taking the pressure off Tehran (reftel). Fahmy suggested that the U.S. appoint a Sherpa soon, to discuss NPT implementation with regional actors in advance of the revcon. Al Saeidi noted that U.S. support for a nuclear-free Middle East resolution at the next revcon would help Egypt foster a healthier and more conducive atmosphere in the Middle East, which would refocus the Arab world on the threat posed by Tehran, rather than on Tel Aviv. Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) agreed with Al Saeidi on the importance of shaping public opinion, especially in a region where U.S. policy is viewed as unbalanced and biased toward Israel.

¶17. (SBU) Shaker said that regional leaders were eager to join the discussion on nonproliferation, and urged Tauscher to revive the UN Conference on Disarmament, which has been dormant for a decade. According to Shaker, Egypt has joined New Zealand, Ireland, Sweden, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico in forming a "New Agenda Coalition," to prepare for the upcoming NPT revcon.

¶18. (SBU) Stressing his background as a nuclear physicist and current IAEA technical board member, Al Saeidi said that it was unlikely that Iran would reach the nuclear threshold within the next few years. He said that the U.S.'s decision to engage Iran directly in the 5 plus 1 negotiations would push the negotiations forward more quickly as Iran would become more engaged. He asked Tauscher to help the U.S. overcome its penchant for living "in a constant worst-case scenario" by working more closely with its allies on Iran strategy.

¶19. (U) Codel Tauscher was unable to clear this message before departure.  
SCOBAY